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INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000876

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI LABOR LEADER SAYS CITE SOLEIL STILL A POWDER
KEG

REF: PAUP 732

11. This message is sensitive but unclassified -- protect accordingly.

12. (SBU) Summary: Patrick Numas, leader of one of the larger labor unions in Port au Prince, believes that despite the recent calm, the situation in Cite Soleil is &a powder keg,⁸ and that the supply of arms continues to grow. The general consensus within Cite Soleil is that President-elect Preval will have three months after assuming office to deliver significant improvements to the people there, particularly jobs, food, water and health care. Lavalas activists in Bel Air working to support Preval offered a similar analysis. Though rumor and speculation overlay the discussion regarding Cite Soleil, Numas highlights a critical point: Cite Soleil residents do expect Preval to take action to quickly address their situation. End Summary.

Cite Soleil Still Armed

13. (SBU) Patrick Numas, Secretary General of the General Organization of Independent Haitian Workers (OGITH), shared his observations with Poloffs on the challenges facing President-elect Preval in Cite Soleil. Numas works closely with laborers throughout the city, but many union members come from slum areas of Cite Soleil, Cite Militaire and La Saline. Numas has been a consistent and reliable source of information regarding the political situation, particularly in the capital's volatile neighborhoods. Numas cautioned that despite the calm in recent months, gangs have not laid down their arms, but rather have stored them for future use (In French Numas said, "reposer" not "deposer," referencing Preval's campaign song that ambiguously played on these two words in the chorus. Preval claimed the message was disarm and calm down.) Weapons are still available to gang members and the supply is growing. He explained that gang members have close links to pawn shop owners in Cite Soleil, who allow them to use their shops as weapons depots. He added that gang members continue to smuggle firearms past MINUSTAH checkpoints, employing elderly people and women pretending to

be pregnant.

Militants and Others

14. (SBU) According to Numas, there are essentially four categories of people within Cite Soleil (in order of size, from smallest to largest): (1) Well-organized, well-armed, and violent gangs who actively seek the return of former-president Aristide; (2) Unorganized, but armed and violent Aristide supporters; (3) Unorganized, unarmed, but potentially violent Aristide partisans; and (4) The remaining unarmed population who are sympathetic to Aristide and who can be easily manipulated by the gangs. He suggested that any programs offered by Preval and/or the international community should start from the outer layer inward, targeting the largest fourth category first and confronting the toughest elements last. Numas also mentioned that the major gang leaders are hoping to receive amnesty from Preval and eventual inclusion in social reinsertion programs. Although all categories support Aristide (and voted for Preval because they thought that he would bring Aristide back to Haiti), Numas noted that they wouldn't press as hard for Aristide's return if their more immediate needs were met.

15. (SBU) When asked how long this calm will continue, Numas stated that the consensus in Cite Soleil is that the gangs have imposed a three-month deadline on Preval after his inauguration to offer deliverables to the people of Cite Soleil. The types of expected improvements include programs for job creation, food, potable water, and medical care. On the labor rights front, Numas is organizing a labor union for the staff of a hospital in Cite Soleil where the workers have

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not been paid since the beginning of the year. The workers told Numas that they continue to come to work because their hospital is one of the only functioning health care facilities inside Cite Soleil, but that they cannot continue to operate much longer without salary.

View from Bel Air

16. (SBU) Lavalas activists from Bel Air "Samba Boukman" (Jean-Phillipe Jean Baptiste) and Delva Daniel gave Polcouns a similar analysis of the challenges faced by Preval in Cite Soleil and other slum areas in a separate conversation on May 15. Boukman and Daniel, who serve as principal points of conduct for MINUSTAH's pacification program in Bel Air (conducted in conjunction with USAID's Bel Air program), reported that cite Soleil gang leaders Amaral Duclanot and "General Toutou" were "panicked" at the imminent prospect of a MINUSTAH "invasion" of Cite Soleil and desperate for inclusion in MINUSTAH disarmament programs. They concurred that arms continued to flow into Cite Soleil, citing control of local markets as the gang's principal source of revenue. They agreed that Aristide militancy was far stronger in Cite Soleil than in other poor neighborhoods.

17. (SBU) Boukman and Daniel consider themselves Aristide supporters, but said that in the interest of stability for the country, they would not press for his immediate return. Apart from the Aristide issue, Boukman and Daniel maintained that the Lavalas base in all of the poor neighborhoods remained united in their basic demands: release of "political prisoners;" reinstatement of Lavalas partisans unfairly fired from government jobs; a halt to police persecution; and additional job creation programs. (Polcouns asked how many of those fired had actually shown up to work while employed. "About half," replied Daniel. "I don't want to exaggerate.") They claimed that the Lavalas base knew that Preval could not solve these problems overnight, but that he must demonstrate at least some progress quickly in order to allow peaceful community leaders like themselves to maintain the upper hand over violence-prone militants.

18. (SBU) Comment: Preval's inauguration has led to a new set of rumors rocketing through the Haitian rumor mill (the "telediolo," or jaw network in Creole) regarding plans by militants of various stripes to reclaim their power and privileges. Numas' analysis highlights a credible premise that underlies most of these rumors: armed elements in Cite Soleil and other slums do expect Preval to address their situation now that he has assumed power. It is difficult to judge whether the three-month deadline is equally credible. That time-frame does roughly coincide with the beginning of the school year) a time when most Haitians take stock of their economic situation as they attempt to gather the necessary funds for school fees and supplies

19. (SBU) Comment Continued. The strategy that Numas outlined for Cite Soleil corresponds roughly to the approach taken by USAID and other development agencies in Bel Air (reftel). Boukman and Daniel confirmed that the gains made in Bel Air continued to hold, where they had been able to eject the most dangerous gang leaders, including General Toutou, with the support of the populace.

SANDERSON